

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 are pending in the present application. Applicants gratefully acknowledge that claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14 recite allowable subject matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 4, 7, 10 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Inoue (JP 2003-121021). Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Applicants respectfully submit that Inoue does not disclose:

a first high-temperature solution heat exchanger and a second high-temperature solution heat exchanger operable to perform heat exchange between the dilute solution in said first branch solution path and a concentrated solution heated and concentrated in said high-temperature regenerator

as recited in claims 1 and 7, and

a first drain heat exchanger and a second drain heat exchanger operable to perform heat exchange between the dilute solution in said second branch solution path and an exhaust heat source which has heated the dilute solution in said high-temperature regenerator,

as recited in claims 4 and 7.

Inoue discloses a high-temperature solution heat exchanger XH, but Inoue does not disclose first and second high-temperature solution heat exchangers. Claims 1 and 7 require that two high-temperature solution heat exchangers perform heat exchange between one branch of the dilute solution and a concentrated solution heated and concentrated in the high-temperature regenerator. Inoue only discloses one high-temperature solution heat exchanger XH which performs heat exchange between a branch of the dilute solution and the concentrated solution. (Figs. 1-4.)

Inoue also discloses a drain heat exchanger XA, but Inoue does not disclose first and second drain heat exchangers. Claims 4 and 7 require that two drain heat exchangers perform heat exchange between the dilute solution in the second branch and an exhaust heat source. Inoue only discloses one drain heat exchanger XA which performs heat exchange between the second branch of the dilute solution and an exhaust heat source. (Figs. 1-4.)

Therefore, Inoue does not disclose the elements as recited in claims 1, 4 and 7.

Applicants respectfully submit that Inoue does not disclose:

a recovery heat exchanger disposed on a solution path through which the dilute solution is introduced from said absorber to said low-temperature regenerator, said recovery heat exchanger being operable to perform heat exchange between the dilute solution in said solution path and a concentrated solution heated and concentrated in said high-temperature regenerator.

as recited in claim 10.

Inoue discloses a heat exchanger XB disposed on a solution path through which the dilute solution is introduced from the absorber to the low-temperature regenerator. (Fig. 2.) However, heat exchanger XB does not perform heat exchange between the dilute solution and a concentrated solution heated and concentrated in the high-temperature regenerator. Fig. 2 of Inoue discloses a vapor stream 20 which exits the high-temperature regenerator GH, goes through the low-temperature regenerator G and then enters heat exchanger XB to heat dilute solution. However, stream 20 is not concentrated solution. Therefore, Inoue does not disclose the elements as recited in claim 10.

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For at least the foregoing reasons, claims 1, 4, 7 and 10 are patentable over the cited reference, and claim 13 is patentable by virtue of its dependence from claim 1. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 4, 7, 10 and 13 is hereby solicited.

In view of the above remarks, Applicants submit that that the claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants request such action at an early date.

If the Examiner believes that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP



Andrew G. Melick

Attorney for Applicants

Registration No. 56,868

Telephone: (202) 822-1100

Facsimile: (202) 822-1111

AGM/mra